

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6402

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, MILS, PBOR, IS, LE
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 4204

1. WE DO NOT PLAN TO APPROACH ISRAELIS FOR THEIR REACTION TO BOUTROS' PRESENTATION UNTIL WE RECEIVE WASHINGTON'S COMMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS. ON AN ISSUE OF THIS SENSITIVITY, PRIME MINISTER BEGIN WILL HAVE TO BE PERSONALLY INVOLVED AND HE OF COURSE WILL NOT BE RETURNING FROM ROMANIA UNTIL AUGUST 30. SOME QUICK REACTIONS TO THE PLAN MAY, HOWEVER, BE HELPFUL TO THE DEPARTMENT AND TO BEIRUT.

2. PARA THREE AND FIVE OF REFTEL DESCRIBE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WE BELIEVE THE ISRAELIS COULD HARDLY SEE AS MEETING THEIR OFF-REPEATED REQUIREMENT: THAT THE PALISTINIAN FORCES WITHDRAW WELL BACK FROM THE BORDER (USUALLY SPECIFIED AS APPROXIMATELY 20 KMS. OR ACROSS THE LITANI RIVER), AND THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY PHYSICALLY REPLACE

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THEM IN POSITIONS BETWEEN PALESTINIAN OUTPOSTS AND THE BORDER. FROM OUR HASTY READING OF THE MAP, IT WOULD STRAIN CREDIBILITY TO THINK THAT A PRESENCE OF KHOURY'S FORCES STATIONED AT MARJAYUM COULD "SECURE THE ROAD" ALL THE WAY FROM MARJAYUM TO THE COAST AT NAKURA VIA BINT JBAYL UNLESS THERE WERE LEBANESE ARMY UNITS PERMANENTLY STATIONED IN THE BINT JBAYL AREA

ITSELF. THIS WOULD BE EVEN MORE UNPERSUASIVE TO THE ISRAELIS WHEN COUPLED WITH THE FACT THAT FOR SOME UNEXPLAINED EXCEPTIONAL REASON TO THE GENERAL WITHDRAWAL 250 PALESTINIANS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN THE BINT JBAYL "MIDDLE SECTOR" AREA.

3. THE ISRAELIS WOULD ALSO, I AM SURE, WANT TO KNOW IN MORE DETAIL HOW MANY PALESTINIANS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN THE ARQUB, AND HOW FAR BACK FROM THE BORDER. IT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN THAT THE ARQUB REMAINS INDELIBLY PRINTED ON ISRAELI MINDS AS WHAT WAS HISTORICALLY KNOWN AS "FATAH LAND," FROM WHICH MANY TERRORIST RAIDS INTO ISRAEL WERE LAUNCHED IN TIMES PAST.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTY OF IGNORING THE FACT THAT PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS HAVE LONG BEEN IN BEING IN THE TYRE VICINITY, AND THAT IT IS UNREALISTIC TO THINK THAT ALL PALESTINIANS COULD BE PUSHED NORTH OF THE LITANI WITHOUT MAKING AN EXCEPTION FOR TYRE. IT MIGHT BE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD SIT STILL FOR THIS EXCEPTION IF THERE WERE EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVE LEBANESE ARMY CONTROL OF TYRE ITSELF AND SURVEILLANCE ON MILITARY ACTIVITIES HATCHING IN THOSE CAMPS. BUT I IMAGINE THE ISRAELIS WILL RAISE THIS QUESTION AS WELL.

5. EXACTLY WHAT THE ISRAELI VIEW WOULD BE OF MAJOR
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HADDAD'S REPLACEMENT WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN. WE ONLY NOTE THAT ANY SUSPICION OR HINT THAT HE WOULD BE COURT MARTIALED FOR HIS "DEFENSE OF THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE AGAINST PALESTINIAN EFFORTS TO SUBMERGE IT," WHICH IS HOW THE ISRAELI VIEW HIS ACTIONS, COULD IN ITSELF SOUR IRREVOCABLY THE ISRAELI VIEW OF THE WHOLE ARRANGEMENT.

6. WE SHOULD RECALL ALSO THE PRECISE NATURE OF BEGIN'S COMMITMENT TO ME. IT WAS THAT IF THE PALESTINIANS WITHDRAW AND THE LEBANESE ARMY REPLACED THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE WITHOUT ANY SYRIAN FORCES ACCOMPANYING THE LEBANESE, THAT HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SEE THAT THE CHRISTIANS DID NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS CHANGE-OVER TO OCCUPY VILLAGES EVACUATED BY PALESTINIANS. IN OTHER WORDS, THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF THE LEBANESE FORCES IS A CRITICAL ELEMENT IN ANY SCHEME WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE EVEN IMPLICITLY TO THE ISRAELIS. THIS RAISES IN MY MIND THE QUESTION WHETHER ESTABLISHING THE MAJOR LEBANESE ARMY BASE NORTH OF THE LITANI AT NABATIYAH WOULD PROVIDE SUFFICIENT CREDIBILITY FOR THE SCHEME TO BE ACCEPTABLE HERE.

7. UNDOUBTEDLY THE LIMITATIONS ON SPECIFIC WEAPONS AS DESCRIBED IN PARA FIVE OF REFTEL WOULD IF BELIEVALBE BE REASSURING. BUT THE PHETHORA OF INTEL IGENCE REPORTS WE HAVE ABOUT WHAT HAS REALLY HAPPENED TO THE WEAPON STOCKS SUPPOSEDLY TURNED OVER IN THE BEIRUT AREA INEVITABLY WOULD LEAD ME, AND I AM SURE THE ISRAELIS, TO PLACE LITTLE RELIANCE ON THOSE LIMITS AS BEING TRULY ENFORCEABLE. THEREFORE THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE MUCH MORE PREOCCUPIED WITH WHERE PALESTINIAN TROOPS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO REMAIN THAN REASSURED BY ALLEGED LIMITATIONS ON THEIR WEAPONRY.

8. WHILE IT SEEMS TO ME THAT HIS PROPOSAL OF BOUTROS
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IS A MAJOR STEP FORWARD, I CANNOT BE AT ALL CONFIDENT ABOUT THE ISRAELI REACTION BEING POSITIVE UNLESS THESE PROBLEMS OUTLINED ABOVE ARE DEALT WITH. I DO NOT THINK IT IS CORRECT CHARACTERIZE THE ISRAELI REACTION TO THE PROPOSAL AS IT PRESENTLY STANDS AS "AN IMPORTANT INDICATION OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO USE OUR INFLUENCE." HOWEVER THE LEBANESE SEE IT, AND I CAN CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND THEIR FRUSTRATION WITH THE ISRAELIS, THE SCHEME AS PRESENTLY OUTLINED DOES NOT SEEM TO ME TO DEAL SUFFICIENTLY WITH THE LEGITIMATE ISRAELI SECURITY CONCERN ABOUT FUTURE PALESTINIAN INCURSIONS ACROSS THE BORDER, AND I FEAR THEY WILL SEE IT THE SAME WAY.

9. WHEN INSTRUCTED TO RAISE IT, I WILL OF COURSE BE AS TACTFUL AS POSSIBLE IN DEFERENCE TO BOUTROS' RATHER CURIOUS PREFERENCE FOR INDIERECTION. BUT I AGREE WITH AMBASSADOR PARKER THAT IF BOUTROS WANTS DIRECT ANSWERS HE WILL HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO HAVE US PUT DIRECT QUESTIONS.
LEWIS

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